ZONING COMMISSION No. 03-24
2126 Wyoming Avenue, NW

Testimony of Steven L. Spurlock, AIA
Wnuk Spurlock Architecture
October 16, 2003

Introduction:

Principal of an award winning architectural firm
- In practice for 25 years
- DC based firm, office located in the neighborhood

Preservation experience
- 6 years on Montgomery Co. Historic Preservation Commission, Vice Chairman 2 years, Chairman 2 years
- President, Board of Directors, Maryland Association of Historic District Commissions
- Guest critic at local universities, given seminars on historic preservation issues

Professional experience
- extensive practice in preservation and infill projects in historic districts, including DC, Georgetown, Alexandria, Montgomery Co., Newport RI
- Extensive project experience in Sheridan Kalorama, including the following:
  2126 Wyoming Ave., NW
  2311 Tracy Place, NW
  2120 S Street, NW
  2207 Massachusetts Ave., NW
  1827 23rd Street, NW
  2033 Waterside Drive, NW
  2123 California Street, NW (The Brighton)
  2029 Connecticut Ave., NW

  Currently serve as "building Architect" for 2220 20th Street, NW (The Mendota) and 2101 Connecticut Ave., NW

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Exhibit 27

Site Description:

The project is located in the Sheridan Kalorama Historic District on the south side of Wyoming in the block immediately east of Connecticut Ave. The large site contains an outstanding resource in the historic district, a 1907 Flemish Revival mansion on the west side, and a two story carriage house at the rear which dates from an earlier time. The grade is relatively flat after an initial rise from Wyoming Ave. and the east side is currently an open yard. The site is bordered on the east by a non-contributing building, a 6 story hotel building known as the Jurys hotel, and on the west by a duplex residence dating from the 50's. To the south (on California Street), are several large, 8-10 story, multi-family structures dating from the early 20th century.

The primary structure was originally built as a single family residence. It remained a residence until the 30's at which time it was sold and converted to a private school. It continued use as a private school until the most recent occupant, the Field School, vacated for new quarters on Foxhall Road and placed the building for sale. My client purchased the property in the summer of 2002.

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Project:

Given this context, our primary challenge was to determine what amount and configuration of development would work best. My client requested that we investigate returning the site to residential use. We initially investigated R3 matter of right proposals, including four single family townhouse residences (two in the mansion / two new), followed by various other options which attempted to minimize impact to the mansion. All of these efforts were unsuccessful with HPRB, which eventually directed us to essentially, not touch the mansion and maintain adequate space at all sides. This left only the open area adjacent to the Jurys wall for any possible new structure. At that point my client approached the Office of Planning and inquired about a single multi-family structure which would require a use variance. The use variance idea was not supported by O.P. Alternatively, O.P. suggested the PUD approach.

Moving forward with the PUD approach and the parameters dictated by HPRB, our next challenge was to determine the appropriate massing and design of the new building. Our approach has been not to maximize development, but to design a building which transitions visually from the hotel to the historic mansion while maintaining space to fully appreciate the historic resource. Our design incorporates 4 condominium apartments on 3 stories plus basement/ cellar. The originally designed building has been raised up, in response to Mr. Mays' suggestion, to provide more light and air to the lowest level. From a design standpoint, it is important to not align with Jurys and to maintain a subordinate height and a stepping effect from Jurys to the mansion.

The design is contemporary in nature, which is in character with the Sheridan Kalorama district's ongoing spirit of eclectic evolution. However, it does incorporate massing, height, and building elements like balconies, which are sympathetic to the historic district. The design has the enthusiastic support of SKHA and has received HPRB approval with final sign off delegated at the staff level. The building will be well detailed with quality materials, appropriate to the district and to my client's desires to bring attractive, desirable residential units to the neighborhood. The primary entry fronts Wyoming Ave., with another entry from the rear where 4 parking spaces will be located off the alley.

The mansion will be restored. Our design is to subdivide the mansion into two approximately equal sized townhouse units. The exist front door will serve one unit, and the other will have a entry from the existing open side porch. We have made every effort to retain as much of the existing structure, and the formal rooms, as possible. The carriage house will be subdivided into two / 2 car garage units with storage above, and have new access from the alley. However, we request the option of retaining the mansion and carriage house as a single unit if a purchaser comes forward.